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Synopses of Important Articles.

THE FALSE PROPHETS. By REV. PROFESSOR A. B. DAVIDSON, in the *Expositor*, July 1895. Pages 1 to 17.

The phrase "false prophets" does not occur in the Old Testament; but it is said of certain prophets that in their statements concerning the future, or their counsels in connection with a particular occasion, they deceived the people. The people, however, did not understand a prophet to be a false prophet if occasionally he spoke what they could not accept or believed to be false. They merely assumed that the Lord had not spoken by him in this particular instance. Compare the case of Jeremiah 43 : 2, whom, nevertheless, the exiles drag down with them into Egypt. How was it that prophets spoke falsely, and how did the people believe them?

1. It is difficult to understand how there could have been false prophets. We wonder how the people should ever have disobeyed the prophet, and how a counterfeit to him should ever have appeared. But if we remember that in the time of Christ the same condition of things appeared, and that in our own day, though we have the Word of God in fuller form, multitudes do not accept it, we should not be surprised at Israel's neglect of the true prophets. It is to be remembered that in ancient Israel there were perplexities as to conduct and faith similar to those of today. There was a Divine voice among the people, but it spoke through the voice of man, "and there was always room to doubt whether the particular voice of man was God's, or when competing voices were heard which was his." The people were doubtless helped (1) by the *prophetic ecstasy*; but this was natural to an Oriental people, and was not essential in true prophecy. So common a phenomenon could not be an unfailing test of the truth or falsity of the prophetic statement. (2) *By miracles*—as in the case of Elijah on Mt. Carmel, but the miracle of the Old Testament did not contain it in any meaning arising from the idea of "law," for the idea of law did not exist; and, besides (a), it is distinctly asserted that others besides Jehovah and his servants worked miracles (Exod. 7 : 11); (b) a false prophet is permitted to work signs (Deut. 13 : 1); (c) from the time of Amos down miracles are rare in the history of prophecy. (3) *By the verification* of the prophet's word and fulfilment. But this could only be realized by the nation whose life was continuous in distinction from the individual, for predictions of the near future were only occasional. The prophecies usually bore upon the destinies of the state, and were thrown into a somewhat indefinite future, "and the people frequently complained that the vision was for many days to come, and of times that are far off

(Ezek. 12 : 22).” The main teaching of the prophets had to do with the downfall of the state, and in respect to this the most important differences between true and false prophets arise. It was only when the prophet spoke too distinctly in reference to the future of the state that they were persecuted, and when their conclusions were thought to be treasonable.

2. Certain kinds of false prophets need only to be mentioned. (1) Those who were connected with local sanctuaries, and who maintained this connection for the sake of gaining a living; who prophesy for hire exactly what the audience wish to hear (Michaiah 3 : 5); (2) those who prophesy by other gods than Jehovah, for example, Baal; (3) those who made use of augury, necromancy, and various kinds of divinations. “Prophecy may be said to have been the intuition of truth accompanied by, not the conviction, but the consciousness that God was giving it.” When the prophet of Jehovah used the acts of divination, it indicated a defective conception on his part of God’s nature.

3. But men who spoke in Jehovah’s name and always used proper methods, who supposed themselves to have Jehovah’s word in their heart, sometimes gave forth conflicting opinions of that word. At times they would advise contrary political policies, at others predict different issues in regard to some enterprise (cf. 1 Kings 22). Michaiah was a true prophet; the 400 were false prophets. False prophets were those by whom Jehovah did not speak. But is it not also true that God did not speak by those prophets because they were false? Michaiah held one view of Jehovah’s nature and his kingdom; the 400 had a different view. They prophesied good for Ahab; Michaiah prophesied evil. “Both the true prophecy and the false had a soil in the past out of which they grew; they are both historical phenomena, marking different degrees of insight into the nature of Jehovah and the principles of the religion of Israel.” It must be remembered that the Israelites absorbed much that was impure from the people whom they conquered. Their life as well as their blood was tainted by this mixture. The Baal worship on the high places invited the Jehovah worship. The service of Jehovah was assimilated to the heathen worship, and the lofty ethical conception of God sank down to the level of a nature-god.

Ostensibly the people worshiped Jehovah, but their conception of him was one proper rather to Baal. Yet in spite of all this the ancient Mosaic conception of Jehovah existed. The prophets were not innovators. Jehovah is the historical God of Israel (Hos. 13 : 4). It is the people who have changed (Isa. 1 : 4). Here now were two conceptions of God; the pure and the impure.

Hence arose two parties which exist throughout Israelitish history; between them there is antagonism as seen in the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah, and in the counter reform of Manasseh and the reaction at the death of Josiah. The spokesmen of the true conception were true prophets, of the impure conception were false prophets. The false prophet believed that Jehovah was indissolubly connected with Israel. He must exercise his power to save Israel and their enemies. “They laid much stress on his power, little if any

on his moral being, and therefore little on the moral condition of the people. Hence their optimism: they saw nothing alarming in the social state of the people, and they prophesied peace." The true prophets thought of Jehovah's righteousness rather than of his power, and consequently understood him to be something larger and greater than the God of a nation. Israel, as a nationality, was nothing to God. If Israel were not righteous he could not be their God. Hence the true prophets were pessimists; they could only see disaster (Jer. 28:8). Consequently the true prophets gradually abandon the idea of the kingdom of God as a state, and grow towards the conception of the church. Their patriotism was misunderstood because they regarded as essential the nature of the kingdom of God rather than its form. "They were able to understand that the state might perish and the community of believers would live." And this ethical nature of the true prophecy is really its characteristic, and that by which it is to be estimated, rather than by the literal fulfilment of its predictive details. The predictions were only embodiments of the ethical and religious principles, projections often so ideal that they could not be literally realized. "But the great general scope of the prophetic outlook regarding the destinies of the kingdom of God, whether nearer or more remote, were verified."

The distinctions made in this article are definite and real. One is compelled to think that no more important contribution to the study of prophecy, considering the space occupied, has been made for many years. The discussion exhibits (1) an adherence to the old school in the main as distinct from the new school of biblical historians, (2) a broad and comprehensive appreciation of the multitude of facts which must be taken into any theory of prophecy, and (3) a cautiousness and delicacy of feeling which are too frequently lacking in modern theological discussions.

W. R. H.

"SLEEP ON NOW AND TAKE YOUR REST," Matt. 26:45 and Mark 14:41.

By Director J. Aars, of Christiania in *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (1895), pp. 378-383.

In the *Theologisk Tidsskrift for den norske Kirke*, January, 1886, the author (Aars) endeavored to prove that none of the current explanations of this sentence are correct, that the words are neither a question nor a command, but a sad or mildly admonitory exclamation, and that τὸ λοιπὸν cannot mean "now" or "further" or the like, but must mean "well" or "then."

This meaning of τὸ λοιπὸν had already been given in E. A. Sophocles' *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, and is also found in the Appendix by R. C. Jebb to Vincent and Dickson's *Handbook of Modern Greek*, 2d ed. London, 1887.

This interpretation, however, seems to have attracted little attention among theologians, and the writer has been asked to give a résumé of his argument in a German periodical. He does so the more willingly because the view

referred to was adopted by the late Professor Caspari as well as the other members of the committee for a new Norwegian translation of the New Testament.

The two verbs can be taken as interrogative only in case τὸ λοιπόν means "still," but this is impossible. Taken as imperatives they not only give an entirely different sense from the question, "Why sleep ye?" Luke 22:45, but stand in sharp contradiction both with the preceding, "Watch and pray," and especially with the following, "Rise, let us go." This amounts to an absolute impossibility, if, in Mark, with its added, "It is enough," we translate, "Sleep on and rest! You have slept enough." Such cutting irony as this interpretation involves cannot be reconciled with the temper which all the other words of Jesus in these last hours, especially in Gethsemane, manifest.

The question thus arises whether the expression can be understood as purely indicative; to which it must be answered that it can, but only if τὸ λοιπόν means "so then."

This meaning, common in modern Greek, can be traced far back. Sophocles gives examples from various writers who belong to the second century A.D., and the beginning of the third; and even from one writer, Polybius, of the second century B.C. See 1, 15, 11; 1, 30, 8; 3, 96, 14; 8, 6, 8; 8, 7, 10. Schweighäuser's *Lexicon* gives also, 2, 68, 9; 4, 32, 5; 10, 45, 2. In some at least of these passages the meaning of "then" or "accordingly" seems unquestionable. I believe, however, that the beginnings of this usage are to be found much earlier. In Plato, *Gorgias* 458 (cited also by Jebb), the question is raised whether Socrates and Gorgias shall continue a discussion in which they are engaged. Chairephon and Callias urge them to continue, and when Socrates indicates his willingness to do so, Gorgias says, αἰσχρὸν δὴ τὸ λοιπόν, ὃ Σωκράτης, γίγνεται ἐμέ γε μὴ ἐθέλειν, "then it would certainly be a shame for me to refuse." In *Menon* 99 B. it is argued that if virtue cannot be taught, then it is not knowledge, and in that case men like Themistocles have not guided the states by wisdom of any kind and not because they were wise men; on this account also they were not able to impart their virtue to others because it did not rest on knowledge; οὐκοῦν ἐἰ μὴ ἐπιστήμη, εὐδοξία δὴ τὸ λοιπόν γίγνεται, "accordingly, if not through knowledge, then indeed (i. e., the only alternative is that) it comes about through right judgment."

These two passages show well the development of the meaning. In both the original sense of "that which remains" can be discerned.

Plato, it is to be observed, uses the article, τὸ λοιπόν. Apparently before the time of Polybius it became customary to omit the article when the word was used in the derived sense of a weak "therefore." In post-classical writers both forms occur, though the omission of the article is more frequent, as in modern Greek. In the New Testament passage the best manuscripts vary so as to make a positive decision impossible.

Four facts appear therefore: (1) As early as Plato τὸ λοιπὸν is used in a sense nearly approaching "therefore" or "then." (2) In Polybius both λοιπὸν and τὸ λοιπὸν have in several passages the meaning "then." (3) The same occurs in several writers of the Roman and Byzantine period. (4) Finally, it is constant in modern Greek. It may be assumed, therefore, that this usage existed in New Testament times. It seems probable that the expression belonged for centuries to the colloquial language, and only occasionally appeared in the literary language. This would explain why it appears so seldom in the New Testament. For, in the majority of the New Testament instances of the phrase, it undoubtedly means "besides," or something akin to that. In Acts 27:20 the word probably means "finally," but the passage shows how near the inferential sense lies to the temporal. In Heb. 10:13 "henceforth" (as in R. V.) is the most probable meaning. In 2 Tim. 4:8, however, the meaning "therefore" seems most appropriate, "therefore there is laid up for me a crown of rejoicing."

If the meaning of τὸ λοιπὸν here advocated is correct, the words of Jesus in Matt. 26:45 and Mark 14:41 are most naturally understood as an exclamation of pain or grief, "So you are sleeping and taking rest!"—a sharp contrast to the conflict through which he had just passed, and at the same time to his previous exhortation to the disciples, "Watch and pray."

This is a most interesting suggestion concerning the interpretation of a sentence which has puzzled many readers and interpreters. Luther, in his translation of the New Testament, rendered it as a question, Ach wolt ihr nun schlafen und ruhen? Weizsäcker gives essentially the same sense, Ihr schlafet fort und ruhet? You are sleeping on and resting? Since the question (if such it is) is evidently one of surprise rather than of inquiry, these translations come nearly to the same thing as the interpretation of Aars; but are open to the objection that they take λοιπὸν in a sense apparently not justified by usage, and which Aars at least says is impossible. Second translates it, Dormez maintenant et reposez-vous, and Stapfer also, except that he omits et, giving the same sense as our English translations, Sleep on now and take your rest. The view of Aars seems to rest upon substantial evidence, and certainly avoids some of the evident objections to the hitherto prevalent translations. E. D. B.